

Shakespeare For White Trash: A Midsummer Night's Dream

***Classic literature translated into Modern English by
Crad Kilodney***

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"Shakespeare For White Trash" is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you'll be a Shakespeare fan forever!

These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.

Main Characters

Theseus — Duke of Athens

Hippolyta — Queen of the Amazons

Lysander and Demetrius — young gentlemen of Athens

Hermia and Helena — young ladies of Athens

Egeus — father of Hermia

Philostrate — master of the entertainments

Quince — carpenter and actor/playwright

Snug — cabinet-maker and actor

Bottom — weaver and actor

Flute — bellows-mender and actor

Snout — tinker and actor

Starveling — tailor and actor

Oberon — King of the Fairies

Titania — Queen of the Fairies

Puck (a.k.a. Robin Goodfellow) — fairy trickster

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed — fairies

Other Fairies

Gist of the story: The problems of lovers are made even more complicated when magic eye drops are placed in their eyes while they are sleeping, causing them to fall in love with whomever or whatever they see first when they wake up. The fairy queen Titania is herself dosed by her husband, Oberon, who is angry with her. Meanwhile, a company of very bad actors is preparing to present a play to help

celebrate the marriage of Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. The hilarious chaos comes to a climax on a midsummer night. Fortunately, when the antidote for the eye drops is administered, the charmed victims regain their sanity and are convinced that their temporary insanity must have been a dream. (*MND* was originally written mostly in verse, but this version has been recast mostly in prose. This delightful comedy-fantasy — reminiscent of *The Tempest* — was the inspiration for composer Felix Mendelssohn's first significant work, the Overture to "Midsummer Night's Dream," written in 1826, when he was 17.)

Act 1, Scene 1. *The palace of Theseus in Athens.
Theseus comes in with Hippolyta and Philostrate.*

Theseus: Hippolyta! Baby doll! Just a couple more days and we get married. (*Aside to her*) I'm so horny.

Hippolyta: You men are all alike. You're slaves to your hormones.

Theseus: Women have hormones, too.

Hippolyta: But we're in harmony with the moon. That's what makes us so-romantic.

Theseus: So you're cyclical and we're non-cyclical. That means we're ready any time.

Hippolyta (Assuming a pose of mock indignation): Try to remember you're marrying-the Queen of the Amazons.

Theseus: I'll be sure to wear my best underwear.-Philostrate.

Philostrate: Yes, my lord.

Theseus: Pass the word to all the young people of Athens. Party, party, party! Get it?

Philostrate: Yes, my lord.

Theseus: Young people should have fun. I love young people. Everybody have a good time. Everybody be happy. Anybody doesn't want to be happy, tell them to keep out of sight. Understand? Now go.

Philostrate: Yes, my lord.

(Philostrate leaves.)

Hippolyta: You're so cheerful, Theseus. You hardly seem like the ferocious warrior who captured me by the sword-and held me to your chest so I couldn't move.

Theseus: It was the biggest thrill of your life. Admit it. *(She laughs.)* And the wedding will be even better. It'll be the best wedding Athens has ever seen.

(Egeus comes in with his daughter, Hermia, and her two suitors, Lysander and Demetrius. Hermia is a short brunette, preferably with a tawny complexion.)

Egeus: Hail, Duke Theseus! I wish you all the happiness in the world!

Theseus: My good friend Egeus, thank you. And happiness to you, too.

Egeus: Oh, but I am not happy, my lord.

Theseus: Why? What's wrong?

Egeus: My daughter, Hermia, will not obey me. I have chosen a husband for her-Demetrius *(Indicating him)*-but this man here-Lysander *(Indicating him)*-has charmed her.

Theseus: In what way?

Egeus: Oh, by the most shameful tricks you can imagine!

Theseus: What kind of shameful tricks?

Egeus: For one thing, he has written her love poems.

Theseus: No!

Egeus: Yes. And he has serenaded her beneath her window with sweet, romantic love songs.

Theseus: Good God!

Egeus: And he has sent her locks of his hair, and flowers–

Theseus: Oh, no!

Egeus: And pretty gifts and toys–

Theseus: Scandalous!

Egeus: And delicious treats of every sort.

Theseus: What a devil!

Egeus: And the poor girl, being so impressionable, has fallen for all his trickery–and she wants to marry him.

Theseus: How awful!

Hippolyta: You would never stoop that low, my lord. I'm so glad.

Theseus: What? Yes, of course–I mean, no.

Egeus: My lord, as her father, it's my right to decide whom she will marry. And if she refuses–she must be put to death. That's the law.

Theseus: Oh–yes–I suppose.

Egeus: As Duke of Athens, you must enforce the law. Otherwise, daughters everywhere will marry whomever they like, regardless of what their fathers think.

Theseus: Oh–well–we can't allow that.

Egeus: I knew you would back me up.

Theseus (To Hermia): Ahem–Now, look here, girl. You must obey your father. He has authority over you–even the power of life and death. Now what's wrong with Demetrius that

you don't want to marry him? He's a fine fellow. He'd be a good husband for you.

Hermia: Lysander is just as good. In fact, I think he's better.

Theseus: Well, I'm not saying anything against Lysander. He's a fine fellow, too. But the point is, Demetrius is better because your father has chosen him.

Hermia: My father doesn't see Lysander as I do.

Theseus: Then you should try to see Demetrius as he does.

Hermia: I can't help it. I want to marry Lysander.

Theseus: If you disobey your father, you'll be punished.

Hermia: What will happen to me?

Theseus (Taking time to think): Well—either you will be executed—or you will have to become a nun and spend the rest of your life in a convent. And that means no men. Ever. And there'll be nothing but bland food, and getting up early, and praying a lot, and wearing a penguin suit, and lots of strict discipline from smelly, old women, and lots of boring domestic labour. Is that the kind of life you want?

Hermia: I'd sooner have that than have my father choose my husband for me.

Demetrius: Why don't you just say yes, Hermia? *(To Lysander)* And why don't you find someone else?

Lysander: No. You find someone else.

Egeus (To Lysander): I've chosen Demetrius. If Hermia marries him, they'll inherit everything from me—and I'm a rich man.

Lysander: My family is just as rich. And I'm just as noble as he is. And if Hermia and I love each other, why shouldn't we get married? This guy *(Indicating Demetrius)* was courting

Helena, and then he dumped her and broke her heart. You can't trust him. He likes to play the field.

Theseus: I heard about that, and I meant to say something to Demetrius.—Look, I'd like to have a private word with you two (*Indicating Egeus and Demetrius*). And you, Hermia—you think about making your father happy. Otherwise, I'll have to uphold the law.

(Everyone leaves except Lysander and Hermia. Hermia gets weepy.)

Lysander: There, there. Come on, don't cry.

Hermia: Why does love have to be so much trouble?

Lysander: Because we love with our hearts, not our minds. We want what we love. And we convince ourselves that we need it and can't live without it. Our minds are asleep the whole time. And if we lose what we love, the mind says, "You see, you deceived yourself. You didn't need it after all. You'll find another." The mind always has the last word—like your father.

Hermia: Maybe I'm a fool, but I don't care. I want you, Lysander.

Lysander: Listen, I have an idea. I have a rich aunt who lives outside of Athens. She's all alone. She'll take us in. We can run away and get married and live with her.

Hermia: Yes! Let's do it!

Lysander: You sneak out of your house tomorrow night. We'll meet in the woods outside of the city—the same place where I met you and Helena.

Hermia: I'll be there.

(Helena comes in. She is a tall blonde.)

Hermia: Oh—Helena. How are you?

Helena: I feel like shit, but thanks for asking. *(There is an awkward silence between the ladies.)* I guess brunettes are in fashion these days. Lucky you.

Hermia: You mustn't be angry with me.

Helena: Of course, not. Just lend me whatever aphrodisiacs you use so I can steal Demetrius-back *(Spoken with emphasis, implying that Hermia stole Demetrius)*.

Hermia: I don't want Demetrius. I've never encouraged him. The more I reject him, the more he wants me.

Helena: The more I want him, the more he rejects me.

Hermia: Well, I intend to go away. He'll never see me again. I'm leaving Athens forever.

Lysander: Yes. We're eloping. Tomorrow night.

Hermia: We're going to sneak out and meet in the woods—you know, our old hangout. I'd like you to get Demetrius back. Really, I would. *(To Lysander)* It's late.

Lysander: Yes.—We have to go, Helena.

(Hermia and Lysander leave.)

Helena: What's she got that I haven't got? I'm just as pretty—aren't I? At least, Demetrius used to think so. He used to think I was very pretty. *(A pause while she considers)* If I tell Demetrius where Hermia will be tomorrow night, he'll be sure to go and look for her. Then when he realizes she's leaving Athens for good, maybe he'll get over her. And then maybe he'll love me again.

(Helena goes out.)

Act 1, Scene 2. *Quince's house in Athens. Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling come in.*

Quince: Is everyone here?

Bottom: All present and discounted for.

Quince: Good. We have to put on a nice play for Theseus and Hippolyta on the occasion of their marriage.

Bottom: Ooh! Ooh! Let's do "The Cheerleaders and the Blood-Sucking Slime Creatures of Calcutta"!

Quince: No. We're not doing that one again-ever. Not after what happened last time.

Bottom: Aww-

Quince: I've written something nicer-"The Lamentable Comedy and Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby."

Bottom: That sounds good. We can be damned lamentable when we put our minds to it.

Others: Yes, yes.

Quince (Reading from a paper): All right, then-Nick Bottom, the weaver. You get to be Pyramus.

Bottom: Is he a good guy or a bad guy?

Quince: He's the romantic hero who commits suicide for love.

Bottom: Oh, I can do that. I'll have the audience in tears. Of course, I'd rather be a villain. Then I could rant and rave and kill a few people.

Quince: Another time.-Flute, the bellows-mender. You're Thisby, Pyramus's lover.

Flute: I don't want to be a woman. I'm just beginning to grow a beard.

Quince: You'll have to shave it off, or else wear a mask. And you have to speak with a woman's voice.

Bottom: I can be Thisby, too. I can do a woman's voice. Listen. (*Speaking in a woman's voice*) Oh, Pyramus, my darling! I love you so much! My breasts are heaving with excitement!

Quince: No. You have your part-Pyramus.-Starveling, the tailor. You're Thisby's mother.

Starveling (In a woman's voice): Oh, Thisby, are you going out again to meet your lover?

Flute (In a woman's voice): Yes, Mother-my darling Pyramus. He's all I think about. He's my stud muffin!

Quince: Knock it off.-Snug, the cabinet-maker. You're the Lion.

Snug: Do I have a lot of lines to memorize?

Quince: No. All you do is roar.

Bottom: I can roar! I can be a great lion! I can do that trick where I jump into the audience and pretend to attack them.

Quince: Definitely not. That's what got us in trouble the last time. If you pull a stunt like that in front of the Duke, you're liable to get us all hanged.

Bottom: Oh! I know what. I could be a gay lion. I could roar with a lisp.

Quince: No.-Snout, the tinker.

Snout: Here.

Quince: You'll be Pyramus's father. And I, Peter Quince-
(*With proud emphasis*) carpenter-will be Thisby's father. That takes care of all the roles. I'll give all of you your lines, and I want you to memorize them by tomorrow night. We'll meet in the palace woods outside of town and do a rehearsal. That way we can keep the play a secret. In the meantime, I'll see about getting all the props we need.

Bottom: Everyone learn your parts so we can be lamentable for the Duke and his bride!

Others: Yes, yes.

(*They all leave.*)

Act 2, Scene 1. *In the woods at night. Puck and another Fairy come in from opposite sides.*

Puck: Hey, Fairy, wassup?

Fairy: Just the usual fairy business—you know, doing errands for Queen Titania—like sprinkling dew on her favorite flowers. She'll be here soon.

Puck: Well, just keep here away from King Oberon. He's gonna party here tonight, and he's angry with her.

Fairy: Why?

Puck: She's got this cute kid from India as one of her attendants, and Oberon wants him, too. But she won't give him up. That's what they're fighting about.

Fairy: Say, don't I know you? Aren't you that trickster Robin Goodfellow?

Puck: Yup. That's me.

Fairy: Oh, you're so bad! You scare all the girls in the village. You turn milk sour. You spoil people's beer. And you lead people into the woods and get them lost.

Puck: Yeah, so what? I bring good luck to those who call me Puck. And I keep King Oberon entertained. He likes it when I play jokes on people. I'm a shape-shifter, you know.

Fairy: That's very naughty.

Puck: It's fun. I can turn into anything, and I can shrink myself very small. One time I turned myself into an apple, and just when somebody was about to bite into me, I made a worm come out. And one time I turned into a stool, and when a lady sat on me, I collapsed myself and she fell on her ass.

Fairy: Tsk! Tsk! That's so bad!

Puck: All people are stupid. They're only good for playing tricks on.-Oh. Here comes King Oberon now. Make way.

Fairy: Uh, oh. Here comes Queen Titania. I think there's gonna be an argument.

(Puck and the Fairy move apart as Oberon and his party of Fairies come in from one side, and Titania and her party come in from the other.)

Oberon: Huh! Come to crash my party?

Titania: Certainly not. I wouldn't party with you-in bed or out of bed.

Oberon: Yeah, I've noticed. You seem to have forgotten that I'm your husband.

Titania: Some husband. I know where you've been. You take the form of a human and carry on with any slut you can pick up.-Oh, and by the way, your ex-girlfriend Hippolyta is going to marry Theseus. Perhaps you've come to bless their marriage.

Oberon: You're one to talk. Okay, so I had a little fling with Hippolyta, but you're still hot for Theseus. You broke him up with his other girlfriends just so you could have him.

Titania: Lies, lies, lies. Since the beginning of the spring, you've been hassling all my fairies, interrupting everything we do, and screwing up the whole natural order of things.

Oberon: Bah!

Titania: You flood the rivers, you ruin the crops, you give the cattle and sheep diseases, you make it hot one day and cold the next, you make people sick-all because you're angry with me.

Oberon: It's your fault for making me angry in the first place. All I want is that boy of yours. I want him to be my page.

Titania: Oh, no, you don't get him. His mother was my friend, and when she died, I took the boy to take care of him. I'm not giving him to you.

Oberon: Hmph!—So, how long were you intending to stay out here?

Titania: A few days—until after Theseus's wedding. My fairies and I are going to do some nice spirit partying. If you want to watch, you can. Otherwise, let us have our space, and I'll stay away from whatever it is you're doing.

Oberon: I don't mind joining you—provided you give me that boy.

Titania: In your dreams.—Come on, Fairies, let's leave the mean, old King—before I punch him in the nose.

(Titania and her party leave.)

Oberon: Aw, go suck a lemon. I'll settle with you later.—Puck.

Puck: Yes, boss.

Oberon: Remember that evening on the beach when we watched that mermaid riding on the back of a dolphin, singing?

Puck: She was hot. I like mermaids.

Oberon: Yeah. That same night, I saw Cupid shoot his arrow at a pretty girl. It missed and hit a white flower instead. And then the flower turned purple. Do you know what flower I mean?

Puck: The pansy?

Oberon: Correct. And the fluid of the pansy, when dropped on the eyes of a sleeping person, will make him fall in love with the first creature he sees when he wakes up—human or otherwise.

Puck: Awesome!

Oberon: You know where the pansies grow. Go and get me some. I have something in mind.

Puck: Oh! Tricks on humans! Brilliant! I'll be back in no time!

(Puck leaves.)

Oberon: Heh, heh. *(To the audience)* Guess who's going to get some magic eye drops while she's sleeping? Titania. And when she wakes up, she'll fall in love with whatever she sees first. Maybe a skunk-ha! Or a goat. Or a Mexican. She'll be out of her mind. And I won't give her the antidote until she agrees to give up that boy.-Oh. Somebody's coming. Fortunately, I can make myself invisible to people. Let's see who this is.

(Oberon moves apart. Demetrius comes in, with Helena following.)

Demetrius: I told you I don't love you any more, Helena. So leave me alone. I'm going to find Lysander and kill him.

Helena: I'm not going to leave you alone! I can't!

Demetrius: Will you stop following me? Go home.

Helena: No. No matter what you say, I won't stop loving you. Let me follow you. I'll even be your pet dog. You can be as mean to me as you want. I don't care. Just so long as I can be with you.

Demetrius: You're sick.

Helena: I'm more sick without you.

Demetrius: Don't you care what people think? You're acting like a slut. A proper woman doesn't go out alone at night.

Helena: I'm not alone and it's not night if I'm with you.

Demetrius: I should just run away and leave you here to fend for yourself. There are wolves out here, you know.

Helena: I don't care about wolves.

Demetrius: I ought to kick your ass, Helena.

(He leaves quickly.)

Helena: I'll die before I give you up! Demetrius!

(She follows him out.)

Oberon: Ah. Demetrius and Helena. Well, well. I think I know how to change his feelings. *(Puck returns.)* Ah, Puck. You have the pansies?

Puck: Right here, boss.

(He gives Oberon the pansies.)

Oberon: Very good. Now, my little elf, are you up for some trickery?

Puck: Always!

Oberon: Good. I know where Titania is sleeping, and I'm going to put some pansy drops in her eyes. You take a few of these and go that way *(Indicates the direction where Demetrius and Helena left)*. Look for a young man dressed in Athenian clothes. He's being followed by a girl he doesn't love. You put some pansy drops in his eyes. Do it when you're sure that the first person he sees when he wakes up will be that girl. Then meet me back here before dawn.

Puck: I will, boss. This'll be so cool!

(They leave separately. Quick segue to the next scene.)

Act 2, Scene 2. *Elsewhere in the woods. Titania comes in with her party.*

Titania: We'll stop here, Fairies. I'm tired. I want to sleep. Why don't you sing something to help me fall asleep? And keep any nasty things away from me while I'm sleeping.

(As Titania lies down at rear stage and off to one side, the Fairies dance in a circle and sing.)

Fairies (Singing):

Oh, pretty Queen, lay down your head
While we dance beside your bed
And keep the nasty beasts at bay,
That you may sleep and dream away.
Away, you bugs and sneaky bats,
Mosquitoes, flies, and pesky gnats,
You spiders, centipedes, and worms,
And dirty things that carry germs,
And blobs and globs that ooze with goo,
Begone and take your friends with you.
All aliens from outer space
And those related, shun this place.
Stay clear, all monsters that are vile,
And lizards, toads, and crocodiles,
And snapping turtles, shrews, and snakes-
Until our pretty Queen awakes.

First Fairy (Leaning over Titania): She's asleep. *(To Second Fairy)* You stand guard. And keep her invisible to people while she's asleep.

Second Fairy: Right.

(The other Fairies leave. The Second Fairy should sit unobtrusively, close to Titania for the rest of the scene, and should only react moderately to the ensuing action. Oberon now tiptoes in and drops the pansy juice on Titania's eyes.)

Oberon: Now, my stubborn Queen, you will wake up when the first ugly creature happens by, and when you see it, you will fall in love instantly.

(Oberon tiptoes out. Then Lysander and Hermia come in.)

Hermia: I'm tired. Let's stop.

Lysander: Okay. I'm not sure where we are anyway. Let's sleep here.

Hermia (Moving apart): I'll bed down here, and you can sleep there.

Lysander: Aww, sweetheart, aren't you going to sleep with me?

Hermia: Oh, no. I'm a good girl.

Lysander: I won't do anything. Honest.

Hermia: Yes, you will. You'll snuggle up to me, and then I'll feel your arm around my waist. And then I'll feel your hand trying to find its way under my dress.

Lysander: Aww-

Hermia: You just sleep right there, and I'll sleep over here.

Lysander: Aww-

Hermia (Mimicking him): Aww-poor boy. You'll just have to suffer. But if you dream of me, you can do whatever you like.

Lysander: I will.

(They lie down at rear stage and fall asleep. Then Puck comes in, looking around.)

Puck: Where the heck is that guy? *(He sees Lysander and Hermia.)* Oh. This is him. He's dressed like an Athenian.- And this must be the girl who was following him.-Huh. She's a good-looking babe. Wonder why he doesn't want her. Well, some pansy drops ought to fix his eyesight. *(He puts the drops on Lysander's eyes.)* Now you'll love this babe when you wake up and see her.

(Puck leaves. Then Demetrius comes in quickly, with Helena pursuing him. They don't notice Lysander and Hermia.)

Helena (Panting): Stop running from me, Demetrius!

Demetrius: Go away. The further you chase me, the more lost you'll be when you lose me.

Helena: I'm already lost. Don't leave me.

Demetrius: It's your own fault. I'm not stopping till I'm rid of you.-Goodbye!

(Demetrius leaves. Helena is too exhausted to follow. She begins to cry a little.)

Helena: It's not fair. He chases after Hermia, but I'm the one who loves him. Maybe I'm ugly and I don't know it. That must be it. I must be hideous. *(She notices Lysander lying nearby.)* Who's this?-Lysander!-What's he doing here? Is he dead? *(She shakes him.)* Lysander-wake up.-Are you all right?

(Lysander wakes up. When he sees Helena, he is wide-eyed.)

Lysander: Oh!-Helena!-You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. You're an angel. I love you.

Helena: You love me? But you love Hermia.

Lysander: No. Not any more. She's so ordinary. But you're extraordinary. I want you.

Helena: Are you sure you're feeling well?

Lysander: Of course. I must not have been feeling well before, but everything's perfectly clear.-Yes-quite clear. And logical. And true. You're my true love, Helena.

Helena: You're making fun of me. You never gave me a second look before, and now you expect me to believe you

love me? Well, I don't believe it. And you're not very nice to make fun of me like this. It's very mean.

(She leaves.)

Lysander: Huh! She didn't even see Hermia.-That's okay. You go on sleeping, Hermia. What did I ever see in you anyway? My brain must have been asleep. But that's all over. From now on, the only one I love is Helena.-I must find her-convince her.-We were made for each other!

(He leaves.)

Hermia (Awakening from a nightmare): Oh!-Get it off me!-What?-Oh!-Oh, what a dream.-Lysander? *(She sees that he's gone.)* Lysander! Where are you? Lysander!

(She runs out frantically.)

Act 3, Scene 1. *The same woods as the previous scene. Titania is still asleep off to the side and rear. The Fairy previously on guard is not present. However, Titania is still invisible to humans while she is asleep. Now the actors come in-Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.*

Quince: This is where we'll rehearse. Everyone's here, so let's begin.

Bottom: Wait, Peter Quince. I think there are one or two problems with this play of yours.

Quince: Oh? Such as?

Bottom: Well, for one thing, you have Pyramus committing suicide with his knife. I think that would be much too gory and shocking to the ladies.

Snout: Yes, it is rather violent.

Starveling: We could cut out the whole scene.

Bottom: No, no. We don't have to cut it out. Just begin the play with some sort of introduction to explain to the

audience that no one is actually harmed in the play. Pyramus doesn't really die. It's just me pretending because it's a play.

Snout: They call that a disclaimer. The lawyers insist on it.

Quince: We don't have any lawyers.

Starveling: But still, some audiences are stupid. They have to have things explained to them. Like in Canada.

Snout: Oh, yes. They're very stupid in Canada.

Quince: This isn't Canada. But all right, I'll write an introduction. I'll compose it in iambic pentameter.

Bottom: Pentameter? That's five meters. That's too long. Five inches would be enough. And don't do it in iambic. Do it in English.

Snout: What about the Lion? Don't you think that'll be too scary for the ladies?

Starveling: I should think it would be.

Bottom: I've always been afraid of lions—*(He shivers)* Brrr!—ever since I was little.

Snout: We should add an explanation for the audience that it's not a real lion, just someone wearing a costume.

Bottom: Yes. And we should say who the actor is who's playing the Lion.

Snug: That would be me.

Bottom: Right. And your face has to be visible through the mask. And you should say to the audience something like "Please don't be afraid, ladies. I'm not really a lion. I'm Snug, the cabinet-maker."

Quince: Yes, that would be all right. While I think of it, there may be a problem about moonlight in the room. We have to

have moonlight in order for Pyramus to meet Thisby at night.

Snout: Will the moon be out the night we do our play?

Bottom: Look in the almanac. It'll tell you.

Quince: Yes, good idea. *(He takes an almanac out of his pocket and peruses it.)* It says the moon will be gibbous.

Snout: What does that mean?

Bottom: Look it up in the dictionary.

Quince: Ah. Yes. *(He takes a dictionary out of his pocket and peruses it.)* It says "Having gibbosity-which, see."-Hold on.-"Gibbosity-a rounded protuberance or hump."

(A pause. Everyone is puzzled.)

Bottom: Well, obviously, the moon has to be shining on that night, otherwise you couldn't see the hump, now, could you? *(He turns to the audience and taps his head to signify how smart he is.)*

Quince: Yes. Quite.

Bottom: And we can open a window so it can shine into the room.

Quince: Yes. Or someone can hold a lantern representing the moon.

Bottom: That'll be totally convincing.

Quince: Now, there's one other thing. Pyramus and Thisby talk through a hole in the wall.

Snout: We can't carry in a wall.

Bottom: Oh! I know! Somebody can play the part of the Wall. We'll cover him in plaster or dirt so he looks like a wall, and he can make a V with his fingers, like this *(Indicates with his fingers)*-and that'll be the hole they speak through.

Starveling: Now that's real stagecraft for you. Brilliant!

Quince: Yes. Very good. Well, I think that solves all the technical problems. Now let's rehearse.–Pyramus, you start. When you finish your speech, you go into the grove over there.–Everyone mind your cues.

(Puck comes in behind the actors. He is invisible and inaudible to them.)

Puck: What are these idiots doing, putting on a play?–Huh. Maybe I can be in it, too.

Quince: Thisby, you stand near Pyramus.–All right, Pyramus, begin.

Bottom: Ahem–Thisby, the flowers of odious fragrance–

Quince: That's "odorous," not "odious."

Bottom: Sorry–ahem–Thisby, the flowers of odorous fragrance are like your sweet breath. But wait! I hear a voice. Who could it be? Wait here by the wall and I shall see, and then I shall return to thee.

(Bottom goes out.)

Puck: I should give that guy a makeover.

(Puck follows him out.)

Quince: Flute, you speak now.

Flute: Oh, Pyramus, you glow like a white lily and a red rose at the same time. You are forever youthful and as handsome as a Jew. You are as steadfast as a horse that never tires. I'll wait for you at Ninny's tomb.

Quince: "Ninus's tomb," not "Ninny's tomb." *(Calling offstage)* Pyramus! You were supposed to come in on "never tires."

(Bottom returns with Puck close behind, grinning maliciously. Bottom now has the head of a donkey but is

unaware of it.)

Bottom: Yes, my darling Thisby. I am all yours.

(The other actors scream and run out.)

Puck: I'm not through with you people yet-ha, ha!

(Puck pursues them.)

Bottom: Hey! What's the matter? Where are you going? What're you running for? Come back!-What the hell? Are they playing a joke on me?

(Snout returns timidly.)

Snout: Bottom?-Why have you got a donkey's head?

Bottom: What?

(Quince returns.)

Quince: What have you done to yourself?

Bottom: Me? Nothing.

(Quince stares at him, speechless, for a few seconds.)

Quince: This is a curse! This is supernatural!

(Quince runs out, with Snout right behind.)

Bottom: What's with these guys? This has to be some kind of joke. That's what it is. They're trying to scare me, that's all. Well, I'll show them they can't scare me. I'll stay right here. That's what I'll do. I'll even sing a song, just to prove how not-scared I am-ha!

(Sings)

Oh, happy as a day in spring

And just as handsome, too,

I'll chase the girls and have some fun

And do what young men do.

And when I have them so worn out
They cannot take another,
I'll have them introduce me to
Their sisters and their mothers.

Titania (Awakening): I hear an angel singing. *(She looks around and sees Bottom.)* Oh! It is an angel!

Bottom: Who, me? Oh, I'm not an angel. My name is Bottom.

(She approaches him.)

Titania: What a handsome man! I generally don't show myself to mortals, but-oh, you are special!

Bottom: Me?-Ho, ho-no, not really-well, perhaps a little.

Titania: Do you know who I am?

Bottom: No.

Titania: I am Titania, Queen of the Fairies. And I want you to stay with me forever. I love you!

Bottom: You do?

Titania: Yes. It's love at first sight. You will live with me here in the woods. I will change you from a mortal human into a sprite. You'll be able to go everywhere with me. You'll be able to float, and fly, and be invisible, and go through walls, and see clearly in the dark. You'll have fairies for servants, and they'll bring you lovely things and sing to you and show you all the secret things that only we fairies know about.

Bottom: Really?

Titania: I'll prove it to you. *(Calling)* Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! Mustardseed! *(These four Fairies come in.)* This man is named Bottom. Take him along the path to my home, and give him all the tastiest treats you find along the way-all the nice grapes and figs and berries and honey.

From now on you'll serve his every need and keep him happy.

Four Fairies: Hello, sir. You are human, aren't you?

Bottom: Of course, I am-ha, ha! What else?

Titania: Now, Bottom, go with them-shh!-quietly, so no one should see you.-Fairies, take him to my home.

(The Fairies and Bottom leave.)

Act 3, Scene 2. *Elsewhere in the woods. Oberon comes in.*

Oberon: I wonder if Titania's awake yet-and who or what she fell in love with.

(Puck comes in.)

Puck: Hi, boss!

Oberon: Ah, there you are, my little trickster. What news do you have?

Puck: I found a bunch of stupid actors rehearsing a stupid play for the Duke's wedding, and I put a charm on one of them and gave him the head of a donkey.

Oberon: Oh, you rascal!

Puck: And you'll never guess what happened after that.

Oberon: Tell me.

Puck: He was the first thing Titania saw when she woke up! Now she's in love with him.

Oberon (Laughing): Oh, that's too much!-And what about the Athenian fellow? Did you put drops in his eyes?

Puck: Yup. And he fell in love with the first woman he saw.

(Demetrius and Hermia come in [Hermia ahead]. They don't see Oberon and Puck, who are invisible to them.)

Oberon: That's him, right?

Puck: No. That's the right woman-but this is the wrong guy.

Demetrius: But I love you, Hermia. How can you accuse me of something so terrible?

Hermia: All I know is, Lysander's missing. You were jealous of him. You had a motive to kill him.

Demetrius: All right, I may have been jealous, but that doesn't mean I killed him. I wouldn't really kill the guy-

Hermia: Then where is he?

Demetrius: How should I know?

Hermia: You killed him and hid his body somewhere, didn't you? Admit it.

Demetrius: No, I didn't. I swear it. He'll probably turn up.

Hermia: Well, whether he does or not, it won't change my feelings where you're concerned. I never want to see you again-Demetrius!

(She leaves.)

Demetrius: What's the use? I can't even talk to her.-I feel like shit.-I need to lie down. *(He lies down at rear stage.)* I'll just give myself a chance to calm down-have a nap-then maybe I'll feel better. *(He falls asleep.)*

Oberon: Puck! You dosed the wrong guy. You fucked everything up.

Puck: Gee, I'm sorry, boss. He was dressed like an Athenian, so I just assumed he was the guy.

Oberon: Listen, you must go find the woman Helena. She's lovesick over this guy. Tall blonde, very pale. You use your magic to bring her back, and I'll put a spell on Demetrius until she gets here.

Puck: Right, boss!

(Puck leaves quickly.)

Oberon: All right, Demetrius, we'll soon take care of you.
(*Oberon places the drops in Demetrius's eyes.*) When you see Helena, you'll be in love with her.

(*Puck returns, running in.*)

Oberon: Wow, that was fast!

Puck: Of course. I can compress space and time. I even stopped for lunch. (*Oberon gives him a skeptical look.*) Okay, I'm exaggerating. I didn't stop for lunch.

Oberon: Where's the broad?

Puck: On her way. And the other guy is following her.

Oberon: Good. We'll just stand aside and watch what happens.

(*Oberon and Puck move to a back corner of the stage.*)

Puck: This is better than television.

Oberon: What's television?

Puck: Something I saw in the future.

(*Oberon reacts with a confused look, which he shares with the audience. Then Helena comes in, with Lysander right behind her.*)

Lysander: Helena, I swear I'm not making fun of you. Am I laughing? No. I'm crying for you.

Helena: You faker. I should believe you? You swore your love to Hermia, and now you're dumping her—is that it? If that's true, then what good is your word to me?

Lysander: People make mistakes. I made a mistake with her, that's all.

Hermia: Your real mistake is giving her up.

Lysander: Demetrius loves her. He can have her. (*He notices Demetrius at rear stage, sleeping.*) Hey, look!

There he is!

(Demetrius awakens and sees Helena.)

Demetrius: Helena?–Oh!–Oh!–Helena!–Oh, my God–Helena–How beautiful you are. Like a goddess.–I love you! *(He kisses her hand.)*

Helena: Oh, bloody hell! This is too much! Both of you. You're both making fun of me. This is so cruel.

Lysander: Demetrius, I've changed my mind about Hermia. I know you love her, so you can have her. I love Helena now.

Helena: Ha!

Demetrius: No, you keep Hermia. I don't want her any more. I was just temporarily out of my mind. I want Helena.

Lysander: Helena, tell him no.

Demetrius: Shut up. Don't interfere.–Oh. Here comes your girlfriend.

(Hermia comes in.)

Hermia: Lysander! Where have you been? Why did you leave me like that?

Lysander: I'm sorry, Hermia–but–I don't love you any more.

Hermia: What!

Lysander: I love Helena now. I don't want you.

Hermia: You can't be serious.

Helena: Oh, so you're in on this little game, too, are you? All three of you. Having a good joke on Helena–is that it? You used to be my friend, Hermia. You should be very ashamed to treat me like this.

Hermia: What have I done? I'm not making any joke.

Helena: You told Lysander to pretend that he loves me. And Demetrius, too. Why else would they lie like this? It's all a

big joke, isn't it?

Hermia: I don't know what you're talking about.

Helena: Yes, you do. You're all being rotten to me—rotten!
(*Weeping*) This is what I get for having feelings—and wanting to be loved.—I don't want to live any more!

Lysander: Wait, Helena! Listen to me! I love you!

Hermia: Please stop putting her on like that.

Lysander: I'm not.

Demetrius: Yes, you are. You leave Helena alone—or else.

Lysander: You mind your own business.—Helena, I swear to God I love you.

Demetrius (To Helena): Just ignore him. I love you.

Lysander: Why don't you shut up! You want to fight me?

Demetrius: Yeah, I'll fight you!

Hermia: Stop it, Lysander!

Lysander: Get lost, bitch. You annoy me.

(Hermia grabs onto Lysander.)

Hermia: What's happened to you? I thought you loved me!

Lysander: Get off me!

Helena: This is all an act. You're all making fun of me.

Demetrius: Lysander's the only one who's acting. He's not going to fight for you.

Lysander: Oh, yes, I will.

Hermia (Grabbing onto him): No! No! No! You're mine!

Lysander: Not any more! I've given you up! Don't you understand?

(A pause of stunned silence by Hermia.)

Hermia (To Helena): This is all your fault! I don't know what went on before I got here, but you obviously stole him from me! Why couldn't you leave us alone?

Helena: Don't shout at me like that-you-you dwarf!

Hermia: Oh, dwarf, am I? The big, tall blonde is acting superior because she's tall!-You-you Barbie doll!

(Hermia grabs Helena by the hair and scratches her face. Helena cries out in pain and shrinks away. There is a pause. Then Helena regains her composure.)

Helena (Softly): I was always your friend, Hermia. I never once did you wrong. If I made a mistake, it was telling Demetrius that you and Lysander were eloping. I thought I could win him back that way-but I was wrong.-I'll go back to Athens. You won't see me any more.-But I leave my heart behind.

Hermia (In a threatening manner): With Lysander, I suppose.

Helena: No. With Demetrius.

(Lysander restrains Hermia slightly because of her threatening manner.)

Lysander: Don't worry, Helena. She won't hurt you.

Helena: She can be vicious, even though she's short.

Hermia: Fuck you, Helena! I ought to punch you out!

Lysander: You are short. And you're not gonna punch anyone out-least of all Helena.

Demetrius: Why are you defending Helena? She doesn't want you.

Lysander: I deserve her more than you do. And I'll fight you to prove it.

Demetrius: Good. That's the best way to settle things. Let's take a walk.

(The two men leave.)

Hermia: Just think, because of you, one of them may end up dead. Aren't you going to stay to see who wins?

Helena: I'm not staying here with you.

(Helena leaves. Then Hermia goes out in the direction of the quarreling men. Then Oberon and Puck come forward to centre stage.)

Oberon: This is really your fault.

Puck: It was an honest mistake. Anyway, who cares? It's fun watching people make fools of themselves.

Oberon: We have to fix your mistake. I don't want those fellows to fight. Now you go after them and make a dense fog and get them separated. And then mimic their voices and lead them around in circles until they get tired and fall asleep. Then I want you to put this antidote *(Gives Puck some leaves or berries)* on Lysander's eyes. I intend to have all four of them fall asleep in the woods tonight, and when they wake up in the morning, they'll think that everything that happened tonight was just a dream. Then they can all go back to Athens, and they'll be back to normal, with no harm done. I'm going to find Titania and persuade her to give up that Indian boy while she's so distracted by Mr. Donkeyhead. Then I'll give her the antidote, and she'll be back to normal, too. Now get going.

Puck: Right, boss! I'll bend space-time!

(They leave in opposite directions-Puck in the direction of the departed men.)

Act 4, Scene 1. *In the woods. Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia are lying asleep at rear stage, partly concealed. Titania and Bottom come in, along with Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed, and [optionally]*

other Fairies. Oberon follows them stealthily and remains apart to spy on them.

Titania: My lovely Sir Bottom, come and sit down with me and let me stroke your lovely ears. You are just too wonderful for words.

(They sit down.)

Bottom: Peaseblossom, scratch my head.

Peaseblossom: Yes, my lord.

(Peaseblossom sits beside Bottom and scratches his head.)

Bottom: Cobweb, could you bring me some honey?

Cobweb: Right away, my lord.

(Cobweb leaves.)

Bottom: Mustardseed, you scratch my head, too.

Mustardseed: Yes, my lord.

(Mustardseed sits beside Bottom and scratches his head.)

Bottom: I feel awfully hairy for some reason. Do you think I need a shave, Titania?

Titania: Oh, no. You're perfect just as you are. Would you like to hear some music?

Bottom: All right. I could go for a good marching band.

Titania: Tsk! That's not very romantic. Are you hungry?

Bottom: I seem to have a craving for oats and hay.

Titania: How about some nice, fresh nuts?

Bottom: No, not nuts. Some dried peas, perhaps. *(Yawns)* Actually-never mind. I can snack later. Right now I'd really like to take a nice nap.

Titania: Yes, you take a nap. You can sleep in my arms.–You Fairies, go now and give us some privacy. *(The Fairies leave.)* Oh, my love, how wonderful you are.

(Bottom falls asleep, and then Titania falls asleep. Now Puck comes in and meets Oberon at centre stage.)

Oberon: Will ya get a load of that? Pathetic, isn't it?

Puck: I think it's hilarious–the Queen loving a donkey.

Oberon: Well, I think this joke has reached its limits. I spoke to her before and teased her about her new pet, and guess what? She agreed to let me have that Indian boy as my servant.

Puck: Oh, good for you, boss. So you have him now?

Oberon: Yes. He's in my quarters. So now I think it's time to end this spell she's under and bring her back to normal. Let her get a good look at Mr. Donkeyhead, and then you change him back to normal. As for these other people here *(Indicating the Athenians)* when they wake up, they'll assume they were dreaming.

Puck: Humans are so simple-minded.

(Oberon puts the antidote drops in Titania's eyes.)

Oberon: Here you go.–Now wake up, Titania.

(Titania wakes up.)

Titania: Oh–oh–I must have dozed off. What a dream I had. I dreamed I was in love with a–agh! *(She finds Bottom in her arms with his donkey head.)*

Oberon: It's all right, my dear. Just a government experiment gone wrong.–Puck, uncharm this jackass and turn him back into an actor.–Titania, make some of that special music that puts people into a really deep sleep. I want these Athenians to be sure they were dreaming.

(Titania waves her arms, and music is heard. The Director has the discretion to choose the music. It can be appropriately serene or else absurdly inappropriate. An appropriate choice would be something Impressionist like Debussy or Ravel. An absurd choice might be Tibetan Buddhist music or Indian music. Another choice would be electronic sound effects. Meanwhile, Puck is “uncharming” Bottom, but the transformation back to normal will not take effect until Puck has left.)

Oberon: Come, Titania. We're not angry with each other any more, are we?

Titania: No. But what happened to me? What am I doing here with these people?

Oberon: It's a bit complicated. I'll explain it all to you later.

Puck: Hey, boss, it's almost dawn. We don't want to be caught in the daylight.

Oberon: Quite so. We'll zoom ahead of the sun at super fairy speed and follow the night all the way around the earth. And then tomorrow night we'll go to the Duke's palace and bless him with good magic for his wedding. And these four over here *(Indicating the sleeping Athenians)* will be paired off the way they should've been, and they'll get married, too.

(Oberon, Titania, and Puck leave quickly. Then the sound of hunting horns is heard. The stage is brightening for daylight as Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus—all three dressed for hunting—and Attendants come in. Bottom's transformation to normal will take place with the Attendants conveniently blocking him from the view of the audience while he slips out of the donkey head. Titania's special music has by now faded away.)

Theseus: Ah, I love a good hunt on Midsummer morning. It's a tradition here, you know.

Hippolyta: It's wonderful. It reminds me of the times I hunted bears in Crete with Hercules.

Theseus: Bears! Oh, my! You may find Athens rather dull, then. I shall have to think of ways to entertain you.-Oh! *(He sees the four Athenians, who are now waking up but are still groggy.)* Well! Well! What have we here? Were you four having an orgy last night, or were you fighting until you collapsed?

Lysander: My lord, I-I don't quite-Where are we?-What the heck am I doing here?-I-I'm trying to remember.-Hermia and I ran away. I remember that much.

Egeus: That's a confession of guilt if I ever heard one.-Demetrius, do you hear? They tried to escape, but now we've caught them.

Demetrius: I'm not sure what happened.-I was chasing after Lysander and Hermia-and Helena was chasing me.-After that-I-uh-This is very strange. I can't explain it, but-I-I don't love Hermia any more. I love Helena. She's the one I want to marry.

Theseus: Well, knock me over with a feather! I can't imagine what happened out here last night, but we'll talk about it later.-Egeus, I've made up my mind. No one's getting punished. Somehow everything has gotten sorted out. Lysander will marry your daughter, and Demetrius will marry Helena.-You four young people can follow us back to Athens. We'll have a triple wedding! It'll be great! I love young people.-Come on, Hippolyta.

(Oberon, Hippolyta, and Egeus depart with their Attendants. The four Athenians are now fully awake. Demetrius takes Helena by the hand, and Lysander takes Hermia by the hand.)

Demetrius: Helena! Did you hear? We're going to get married! At the Duke's palace!

Helena (Hugging him): Yes!

Hermia: Lysander! We can go back to Athens-and be married!

Lysander: Yes!-Hermia, did you have a strange dream?

Hermia: Yes. Did you?

Lysander: Yes.

Demetrius: So did I.

Helena: And so did I.-At least, I think it was a dream. You and Lysander both said you loved me. And Hermia was very angry.

Lysander and Hermia: Yes! Yes!

Demetrius: Could we all have had the same dream? Is that possible?

Lysander: I don't know, but I feel entirely in my right mind now.

Hermia: Thank God.

Demetrius: Let's go back to Athens.

(The four of them leave, talking about who dreamed what. When they're gone, Bottom wakes up, thinking he fell asleep among the other actors.)

Bottom: My cue-What's my cue?-"Handsome Pyramus"-that's it.-Hey! Peter Quince! Flute! Snout! Where is everyone?-Holy jumpin' Jesus, what a strange dream I had. I dreamed I was a-and then there was-and there were three-no, four-and there was this woman-she said I could fly-and-Mr. Mustard?-Colonel Mustard?-scratching my ears-Oh, my goodness. If I tell anyone what I dreamed, they'll call me a jackass. Huh! But I know what. I'll have Peter Quince write a play about it. It'll be called "Bottom's Dream." Oh, it'll be

so poignant! It'll be a classic! Of course, I'll be in it—as myself.

(He leaves.)

Act 4, Scene 2. *In Quince's house in Athens. Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling come in.*

Quince: Has anyone seen Bottom? Did anyone check at his house?

Starveling: Yes. Nobody knows where he is.

Flute: We can't put on the play without him.

(Snug comes in.)

Snug: The Duke is on his way back from the temple. And two other couples got married, too. We'd make really good money tonight if we could do the play.

Flute: Bottom would've gotten a nice pension from the Duke as a reward—six cents a day, easy. Just for playing Pyramus.

(Bottom rushes in.)

Bottom: Hey, you guys! You won't believe—

Quince: Thank God! You're back!

Bottom: Have I got a story to tell you! But it'll have to wait. We have just enough time to get over to the palace and get ready by the time the Duke finishes his dinner.—Thisby, make sure your underwear is clean.—And the Lion, make sure your nails are long.—And nobody eat any onions or garlic. We want the critics to say this was a sweet performance. Now let's get going.

(They all leave.)

Act 5, Scene 1. *In the palace of Theseus. Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, Lords and Attendants come in. All sit down except Philostrate and the Attendants.*

Hippolyta: What a strange story those young people told.

Theseus: You mustn't take them literally. People in love are all slightly insane. They can't distinguish reality from imagination.

Hippolyta: But they all told the same story, so something strange must have happened, even if we can't explain it.

(Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena come in.)

Theseus: Ah, here are the happy newlyweds! We wish you the greatest happiness.

Lysander: And the same to you, my lord.

Theseus: Come and join us. *(The four newlyweds sit down.)* Philostrate, what sort of entertainment have you arranged for us?

Philostrate: We have a number of acts, my lord. You can see whatever you like. *(He refers to a list on paper.)* We have a transvestite of colour who plays the zither and sings an epic poem, "My Battle With the Centaurs."

Theseus: Mm-no. What else?

Philostrate: We have the Agony Actors of Argos performing "The Orgy of the Barbarians and the Mass Murder of the Two Thousand Peasants."

Theseus: I've seen it. It's not bad, but it's much too long.

Philostrate: We have Glaucon, the shepherd, and his clever porcupine, Gus, who does tricks.

Theseus: No.

Philostrate: We have the Turkish Nose Flutists.

Theseus: Uh-uh.

Philostrate: An exhibition of Ethiopian camel jousting.

Theseus: No.

Philostrate: Stella, the Bat Woman.

Theseus: What does she do?

Philostrate: She pretends to fly, but actually she hangs from a wire.

Theseus: I'll pass.

Philostrate: Egon, the Wall Smasher. He runs into a stone wall with his bare head and smashes it-the wall, that is.

Theseus: Mm-I don't think so.

Philostrate: We have Mbuku Jumgwuthka, a poet. He sits in a cage and screams poems of liberation.

Theseus: Too political.

Philostrate: We have the Australian Dwarf-Tossers. They throw dwarves into a net.

Theseus: Boring.

Philostrate: We have Wong, the Human Egg Roll. He dives into a cauldron of boiling oil and cooks himself.

Theseus: Mm-that's a maybe.

Philostrate: And finally, we have some local tradesmen-Peter Quince and his Plucky Players-performing "The Lamentable Comedy and Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby."

Theseus: What's that about?

Philostrate: It's hard to say. Judging from the script, it's complete nonsense. The actors are terrible. And the humour is entirely unintentional.

Theseus: Arts Council sort of thing, is it?

Philostrate: No, I don't think so. I'd say it was even worse. But at least it's short.

Theseus: Okay. I could use a good laugh. Bring them in.

(Philostrate goes out.)

Hippolyta: Lamentable comedy and cruel death? This is going to be a stinker.

Theseus: We have to support the arts, my dear. After all, this is Athens, the cradle of civilization. We'll be nice to these fellows, no matter how bad they are. Besides, it takes a certain amount of courage to stand in front of an audience when you have no talent.

Hippolyta: Assuming they're aware of it.

Theseus: And if they're not aware of it, they must be that much more sincere—for which I give them credit.

Hippolyta: I suppose.

(Philostrate returns.)

Philostrate: Your Grace—and ladies and gentlemen—Peter Quince and his Plucky Players.

(A flourish of trumpets. Then Quince comes in to present the Prologue.)

Quince:

The Plucky Players hope you will
Enjoy them as they show their skill,
Which may not be so great, but still
We hope it will not make you ill.
Forgive the errors of their arts
As they perform their humble parts,
They do so with the purest hearts,
Not to be targets for your darts.

Hippolyta (Aside to Theseus): Where's my bow and arrow when I need them?

Theseus: Shh.

(Bottom comes in as Pyramus, Flute as Thisby, Snout as the Wall, Starveling as Moonlight [holding a lantern], and Snug as the Lion.)

Quince: Ladies and gentlemen, as you follow the play, it will become clear, because it has been written with clarity in mind—so as not to confuse the audience. This is Pyramus, and this is Thisby. This is the Wall, which is made of lime and cement, and which separates Pyramus and Thisby, who are lovers. They speak to each other through a little hole in the Wall. This player is the Moonlight, represented by the lantern. He is necessary because it is night, and Pyramus and Thisby are meeting at night at the tomb of Ninus. Thisby encountered the Lion and chased it away before Pyramus arrived. But she lost her cloak, and the Lion chewed it with his bloody fangs and stained it with blood. When Pyramus arrives, he finds the cloak and, believing Thisby has been eaten by the Lion, he stabs himself out of grief. Thisby, finding him dead, takes his knife and kills herself. However, no one will actually die, as this is only a play. Thank you.

(All the Players leave, except Snout, who remains as the Wall.)

Theseus: I like this already.

Snout: I am the Wall—as you can see from the dirt and cement. And this is the hole *(Holds up his fingers in a V)* through which the lovers communicate.

Demetrius: A talking wall. Now, that's original.

Theseus: Shh. Here comes Pyramus.

(Bottom comes in as Pyramus.)

Bottom: Oh, how dark is the night! Why must the night be so dark? Why must the day end and be followed by night—when I would rather it were the other way around? Oh, how I

suffer. All alone in the night. And where is Thisby, the woman I love? Oh, you great Wall, which separates her father's property from my own—oh, Wall, where is your hole, that I may speak to my beloved Thisby through it? *(The Wall holds up his fingers in a V and wiggles it for the benefit of the audience.)* Oh, thank you, kind Wall. I shall look through you. *(He looks.)* But where is Thisby? Oh, Wall, you have tricked me! You are cruel. I curse you.

Theseus: The Wall should curse you back.

Bottom: No, my lord. The Wall does not reply. Thisby will come in now, and I will see her, don't worry.—And here she comes now, right on cue.

(Flute comes in as Thisby, on the opposite side of the Wall.)

Flute: Oh, Wall, so many times have you heard me sigh because you separate me from Pyramus. How often have I kissed your stones, wishing they were his lips.

Bottom: I see a voice. I will look through the Wall and hear Thisby's face. *(He looks.)* Thisby!

Flute (Looking): Pyramus—my love!

Bottom: Your lover as well as your love. I am faithful to you, like Limander.

Flute: And I to you, like Helen—until the day I die.

Bottom: And as Shafalus was to Procrus, I'm just the same.

Flute: And I am equally as much faithful in the same way.

Bottom: Then kiss me through the hole in the Wall.

Flute: I cannot reach. My lips touch only the Wall.

Bottom: Then meet me at Ninny's tomb.

Flute: Yes. At once.

(Bottom and Flute leave separately.)

Snout: This concludes the Wall's usefulness in the play, and as I have no more lines, I shall leave. Thank you.

(Snout goes out.)

Theseus: Wait a minute. The Wall marks the property line. He can't leave.

Philostrate: I told you it was nonsense.

Hippolyta: This is the worst play I've ever seen.

Theseus: Some people would like it for that very reason. After all, who could be funnier than fools trying to be serious?

(Snug, as the Lion, and Starveling, as Moonlight, holding a lantern, come in.)

Snug: Ladies, fear not. It is only I, Snug, the cabinet-maker, as the fierce Lion. *(He roars.)* But, of course, in real life I wouldn't hurt a fly.

Demetrius: Now there's a lion for you. Wonderful acting.

Theseus: Let's hear what the Moon has to say.

Starveling: This lantern is the moon—which you see here as a crescent, although in reality it's gibbous tonight, which is to say, having a gibbosity or hump.

Theseus: That was it. You all heard it.

Lysander: My lord?

Theseus: The worst line ever delivered in the history of the stage.

Hippolyta: And if you'd asked for Wong, the Human Egg Roll, you would have missed it.

Lysander: What else do you have to say, Moon?

Starveling: Only that the lantern represents the moon, and I'm the man in the moon.

Demetrius: Then shouldn't you be inside the lantern?

Starveling: I couldn't possibly fit, sir.

(Flute returns, as Thisby.)

Flute: This is Ninny's tomb, but where is Pyramus?

(Snug comes in as the Lion, and roars. Thisby screams and slaps at the Lion. The Lion pulls her cloak off and chews on it. Thisby continues to scream and slap at the Lion, who runs out. Then she runs out in a different direction.)

Theseus: Brilliant. Stupendous.

(Bottom returns as Pyramus.)

Bottom: Moon, I thank you for your sunshine. By your sunny moonbeams I will see my true love, Thisby.-What's this?

(He picks up the cloak.) Oh, no! It can't be! Oh, my poor Thisby-eaten by-a lion! Oh! What cruel fate! I can't go on! Take me now, cruel spirits! Kill me!

Theseus: I can see how a fellow would be upset under the circumstances.

Hippolyta: Poor Pyramus! I feel sorry for him.

Theseus: Don't worry. He's got a day job.

Bottom: I shall take my knife and put an end to this miserable life-like this! *(He stabs himself in the heart but without any effect until he has stabbed himself four times.)* And this!-And this!-And this!-Oh!-I die.

(Pyramus falls dead, and Starveling simply walks out.)

Demetrius: Now there's a first-guy stabs himself in the heart four times.

Theseus: If we send for a doctor, we might be able to revive him.

Hippolyta: The Moon left too soon. Now how is Thisby supposed to find the body?

Theseus: By starlight, of course.–Here she comes.

(Flute returns, as Thisby.)

Flute: Pyramus! Are you asleep? Are you dead? *(She feels his wrist.)* Oh! Pyramus! Gone forever! Oh, weep for me, lovers everywhere. His eyes were as green as onions. His lips were like marble. His nose–and his cheeks–*(Flute hesitates as if he has forgotten his lines.)* Gone forever! Oh, cruel fate! What have I to live for now? *(She takes Pyramus's knife and stabs herself in the chest too soon, before she delivers the next line.)* And so I stab myself in the heart!–Oh!–Goodbye, cruel word!–Pyramus is in heaven, where I shall soon be as well.

(She falls dead.)

Theseus: Who's going to bury them–the Moon and the Lion?

Demetrius: Perhaps the Wall will help.

Bottom (Still lying on the ground, supposedly dead): No, sir, the Wall has left. Would you like to see the Epilogue, or hear a dance by two of the players?

(Bottom and Flute stand up.)

Theseus: No, that's all right. We've seen and heard quite enough, thank you. Anything further would spoil the dramatic impact. Very good play. Well done–although next time, the author of the play should die, too.

Bottom: Yes, my lord. Thank you. Good night.

(As Bottom and Flute leave, a bell strikes.)

Theseus: It's midnight. Time for newlyweds to go to bed. *(Everyone gets up.)* Feel free to sleep in as late as you want. Breakfast will be whenever.

(Everyone leaves. Then Puck comes in with a broom and casually sweeps his way to centre stage, pausing to pick up

something, such as a coin, which he pockets. Once at centre stage, he stands still, holding the broom upright.)

Puck: Now is the time for all good people to be safely tucked into their beds-while wolves howl at the moon, and all the ghosts and witches come out of their secret places to roam the land. And Fairies, too. We do our best work at night. We'll stand watch over this palace tonight and keep the evil spirits away. We'll sweep them right out *(He makes a sweeping motion with the broom).*

(Oberon, Titania, and their party of Fairies come in. Puck stands slightly apart.)

Oberon: Now, all you Fairies, it's time to join hands for some good magic.

Titania: Yes. Everyone-make a circle, and we shall bless this house and all who sleep within it.

(Oberon, Titania, and the Fairies dance in a circle and sing, with Oberon leading.)

Oberon (Singing):

We Fairies dance the circle round
Our promises to keep
And shower all our blessings
On the mortals fast asleep,
May all their thoughts be kind ones
And their love eternal be,
And their children all be fine ones,
And may all live happily,
May good fortune always find them
And all evil keep away,
And each day on earth be peaceful

Till they all be old and grey.

Oberon (Speaking): Now, Fairies, take your stations throughout the house and chase out any bad spirits. But be sure to meet me before sunrise.

(The Fairies flutter away, followed by Oberon and Titania, holding hands. When they are all gone, Puck returns to centre stage, still holding his broom.)

Puck (To the audience): If we have offended you or disappointed you in any way, I sincerely apologize and promise that we will do better next time. Of course, if you think you can dream a better dream yourself, please do so. I'll even help. Just call for me tonight when you're in bed. Call out for Puck—or Robin Goodfellow—and I'll meet you in your dream. What happens then—well, you know my reputation. You take your chances. And afterwards, when you tell others about your dream, they may or may not believe you.—You may not even be entirely sure of it yourself.

(Puck goes out, with a few casual sweeps of the broom along the way.)

END

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